

Testimony: HB 612, Rep. Henry, Responsible Sexual Education
Date: February 21, 2007
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Organization: Montana Human Rights Network
Topic: Education and the Highest Attainable Level of Health as Human Rights

International human rights law establishes that every person, including every child, has the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the right to life, the right to seek, receive and impart information of all kinds, the right to nondiscrimination and equal protection of the law, and the right to an education. These rights stand alone, but in significant respects relating to this bill are intertwined and reinforce one another.

Indeed, Human Rights Watch found that federally funded abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Texas interfere with fundamental rights guaranteed by international law, including the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds and the right to the highest attainable standard of health. Because AIDS is a fatal disease that yet has no cure, the American government's failure to provide complete and accurate information about HIV/AIDS prevention is a clear violation of every citizen's right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Comprehensive sex ed is not about imparting a dangerous message to our young persons. The dangerous message is already out there. A responsible sex ed program in fact controls the message to our children. It gives our children the ability to decide what is healthy for them and what is not. While the lesson of abstinence is a part of a responsible discussion about sex, it should be an equal component in this discussion. A truthful precautionary discussion with our young people about the risks they face, and the many options to lower these risks, is absolutely necessary. In fact, responsible sex ed is the only way in which we can honor the rights of all persons to be educated about how to attain the highest standard of health possible.